

Whitefriars Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121909
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	380349
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Carol Worthington

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathleen Davies
Headteacher	Deborah Stewart
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2007
School address	Boughton Drive Rushden NN10 9HX
Telephone number	01933 359269
Fax number	01933 311748
Email address	head@whitefriars-inf.northants-ecl.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 14 lessons led by six teachers. Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, and members of the governing body. Inspectors held discussions with two groups of pupils and spoke with many more informally. They observed the school's work, and looked at records of assessments of pupils' attainment, data tracking their progress and samples of their work in books. All safeguarding documents were scrutinised. Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires returned by 69 parents and carers and by 16 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Inspectors investigated the effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve pupils' attainment in reading from its recent dip.
- They considered whether all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least the expected progress indicated by their starting points
- Inspectors judged how effectively the school's curriculum develops the literacy, numeracy and information and communication skills of both girls and boys.
- They looked at how well the monitoring role of subject leaders has developed since recent management changes.

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average infant school is in an urban location close to Wellingborough. Virtually all pupils are from White British backgrounds, and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is about average, but none has a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Over half of the school's teaching staff has changed in the last year. The school has achieved National Healthy Schools status and the Sing-Up Platinum, Activemark and Intermediate International awards.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Whitefriars Infant School provides a good education for its pupils. They make good progress throughout the school as a result of consistently good teaching. Their overall attainment has been maintained at significantly above average levels for the majority of the last five years. This is because of consistently high standards in writing and mathematics. Attainment in reading, however, has varied, and has fallen in the last two years to only just above average. This is because boys' attainment in reading, although above that of boys nationally, is much lower than that of girls, whose standards remain well above average. The school's introduction of new reading schemes has had some success, but boys remain less skilled in using letters and their sounds to build unfamiliar words. New resources have been introduced but have not yet had an impact on boys' motivation to read, so they do not gain such a wide experience of literature as girls. Writing is a particular strength in Key Stage 1, but is not as strongly developed in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils develop early writing skills well in taught sessions, but they have limited opportunities to enhance them further through independent activities.

Teachers use assessment well to plan work matching the ability range of pupils in all classes. Higher-attaining pupils are particularly well challenged. Reorganisation of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has resulted in an improvement in the effectiveness of targeted support and in higher attainment. The curriculum includes motivating practical topics which are particularly effective in developing writing and computer skills. Pupils enjoy many well attended clubs, including a residential visit for pupils in Year 2.

School leaders and all staff provide a nurturing environment for pupils, who feel safe and well cared for. Pupils have good social skills, behave well and gain an excellent understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Older pupils actively promote healthy food and exercise to younger ones at lunch and play times. Their parents and carers are highly satisfied by the school, which maintains an outstanding partnership with them. Arrangements for entry to the school, and transfer between key stages, are examples of recognised exemplary practice which are shared with other schools.

Good leadership results from a strong partnership between senior leaders and the governing body, which strongly communicates its vision for success. The developing role of subject leaders adds further strengths. Accurate school self-evaluation and good improvements in teaching, assessment, curriculum and management since its previous inspection, all indicate the school has good capacity for further sustained

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improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in reading to match that in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, and boys in particular, are given regular opportunities to apply their knowledge of letters and sounds to build unfamiliar words
 - improve opportunities for reading experiences in all curriculum areas and in a variety of media, to equip pupils with wider opportunities to develop comprehension skills
 - ensuring that subject leaders monitor and evaluate the impact of introduced strategies on pupils' attainment in reading.
- Provide more opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop their emergent writing through a wide variety of independent activities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Current attainment in the school is clearly above average for writing and mathematics. The standard of girls' reading is well above average, but boys continue to lag behind girls in the school, although their attainment is above boys nationally. In a mathematics lesson, for example, pupils showed good measuring skills for their age, but some boys were unable to identify the articles to be measured from their worksheets, often confusing initial sounds such as 'b' and 'd'. In a session to develop the use of letters and sounds, pupils were able to identify words containing 'sh' sounds orally, but not given the opportunity to build them up in print for themselves. Most pupils in Year 2 showed good independent writing skills when recording the results of their science investigation to decide on the best soap to clean their hands. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities were given effective support by well-trained teaching assistants to build words and learn appropriate scientific vocabulary.

Pupils' good behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning in class. They enjoy lessons and are keen to do well. They know their targets for improvement and understand the 'tickled pink, green for growth' system used by their teachers well enough to decide how well they have done at the end of a lesson. Pupils are able to express their views articulately and participate keenly in discussions about their learning and well-being. The school council is strongly involved in promoting a healthy lifestyle through discussions with the school catering service about menus and choosing new equipment for active play. Pupils willingly take responsibility for jobs around the school. They take part enthusiastically in sporting and cultural activities and take delight in their correspondence with children in a school in Ghana. Pupils are prepared well for junior school by their good academic standards and personal qualities.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Lessons are well-structured, with clear objectives and often involve practical activities. Interactive whiteboards are used regularly as a motivating focus and to share good work to the whole class. Recent staff changes have been managed well because teachers' good expertise in both knowledge and methodology has been shared effectively. Assessment procedures have improved greatly since the previous inspection and are used well to plan activities which challenge pupils of all abilities. An outstanding example of the use of 'green for growth' was seen in a mathematics lesson where the teacher projected pupils' work on the screen to help them to achieve higher attainment levels and record their work more efficiently.

The curriculum provides exciting themes which motivate pupils of all abilities to learn, especially in practical subjects such as design and technology, where, for example, both boys and girls enjoy sewing and making wind-up mechanisms. Projects such as 'harvest hats' are carried out enthusiastically at home and displayed in school. There are good opportunities to develop writing, numeracy and computer skills, but fewer to develop wider reading opportunities, especially for boys.

All pupils are well cared for in a very supportive environment. This makes a good contribution to their personal development and well-being, and provides effective support for their learning. Improvements in provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have enabled support to be effectively targeted,

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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so they make good progress from their starting points. A significant number attain average standards. The work of the parent support adviser is a significant feature of the school’s support for families in difficult circumstances, and has resulted in rapid improvements in attendance over the last year.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The very good leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher successfully motivates the whole school community to share a common vision and ambition for success. New subject leaders have recently been empowered to drive forward improvements in their areas through evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Staff morale is high. All share high expectations, a strong sense of purpose and a belief in the school’s success. Targets set for pupils are challenging and regularly met, but exceeded more often by girls than boys. Parents and carers are exceptionally well informed about all aspects of their children’s achievements, well-being and development, through prompt communications in a wide range of media.

The governing body makes a significant contribution to the work and direction of the school. Its members are fully and systematically involved in evaluating the work of the school, including the effectiveness of the school’s high priority for regular training in safeguarding and child protection. Consequently, safeguarding is good. The school integrates issues about safety into the curriculum, so pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, a point endorsed by their parents and carers in questionnaire responses.

The school makes sure everyone has equal opportunities to succeed. There have been no instances of discrimination or racial intolerance in the last three years. Underachievement of individual pupils and groups is quickly identified, and that of some pupils with special educational needs has recently been addressed by improved provision. The current gap between girls’ and boys’ reading standards has been identified as a current priority for the school. A new system for teaching letters and sounds has been introduced but it is too soon for the full impact to be seen. All pupils have opportunities to take part in the wide variety of enrichment programmes.

The school actively promotes community cohesion within the school community and the immediate neighbourhood, where pupils give singing concerts, support local charities and help with litter picking and parking problems. Members of the

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governing body play a significant role in maintaining the school’s outstanding partnership with parents and its good standing in the local community. It reaches out to other communities through opportunities to learn about the countries, traditions and beliefs of the few pupils entering the school from the wider European community. There are also links with other schools in celebrating cultural diversity, and international links, for example, with a school in Ghana.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the school with most skills and knowledge similar to those expected for their age, but their communication and calculation skills are lower. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that, by the time they enter Year 1, most aspects of learning are above expectations, except for early skills in linking sounds and letters and calculating, which are a little lower than expected for their age.

Children learn, in daily taught sessions, to identify letters and sounds, and practise writing them accurately on paper and in other media such as sand and paint. They learn to add numbers together in simple ‘sums’. There are many exciting activities for children to explore, including role play in a hospital and fire station, in the well-equipped learning environments indoors and in the ‘barn’ area, which is being used in the interim as the outside area is awaiting development. These do not consistently provide opportunities for children to develop their early writing skills through play, however.

Children are confident and happy in this secure and welcoming environment. Their personal, social and emotional development is good, shown by their good behaviour

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and relationships with each other and with adults. They fully understand class routines, being able to identify daily activities displayed as carriages in their daily 'train journey'.

Teachers plan a wide range of motivating activities to develop learning. Children enjoy using the interactive whiteboard, for example, to identify the occupants of screen houses, and learn about the jobs they do. Planning and assessment are good and include activities across all the areas of learning. The safety and welfare of all children has a high profile. The excellent partnership with parents and carers extends to home visits and tailored guidance and information about precise ways in which parents and carers can support their children's learning. Leadership is good and directed towards further improvement, for example, to engage boys more consistently in reading and writing activities.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a larger than average return of completed questionnaires. Virtually all parents and carers were overwhelmingly positive about the school, both in their questionnaire returns and in discussions after assembly. Many positive comments were received on the caring nature of the school and its staff, children's progress, the quality of teaching and school leadership. A few negative comments related to individual concerns and are more appropriately referred to school staff directly. Inspection evidence supported the positive views of parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitefriars Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 169 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	52	75	16	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	81	11	16	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	45	65	19	28	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	65	16	23	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	50	72	17	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	52	75	16	23	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	75	16	23	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	48	70	15	22	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	47	68	18	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	61	22	32	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	64	19	28	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	52	75	13	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	49	71	18	26	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



7 November 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Whitefriars Infant School, Rushden, NN10 9HX

Thank you very much for being so polite and helpful when we visited your school recently. It was good to see you enjoying your work and play. We think your school gives you a good education and prepares you well for junior school.

Your headteacher and governing body run the school well. Teaching is good, so you enjoy your lessons and work hard, too. You do very well in writing and mathematics, but boys in particular do not do quite so well in reading. Your writing is particularly good in Years 1 and 2 but children in Reception do not get enough chance to practise it through their play activities. You are also good at other things like design and technology, art, music and physical education. Your behaviour is good and you all get on well together, so the school is a happy place. You enjoy your learning and are able to use 'tickled pink' and 'green for growth' to know how well you are doing and how to get better. We were very impressed by your excellent knowledge about how to keep yourselves healthy.

All the adults take good care of you and you told us you can always talk to someone, if you have problems. You know how to keep yourself safe in school and outside it. You enjoy learning about children from other parts of the world and the letters you exchange with your friends in Ghana.

All the adults in your school want it to be even better. To make this happen, I have asked them to:

- make sure you improve your reading so it is as good as your writing and mathematics
- make sure that all Reception children get more opportunities to develop their writing through their play activities.

You can help by always doing your best. I wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Carol Worthington
Lead inspector

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